



JULY

NO. 68

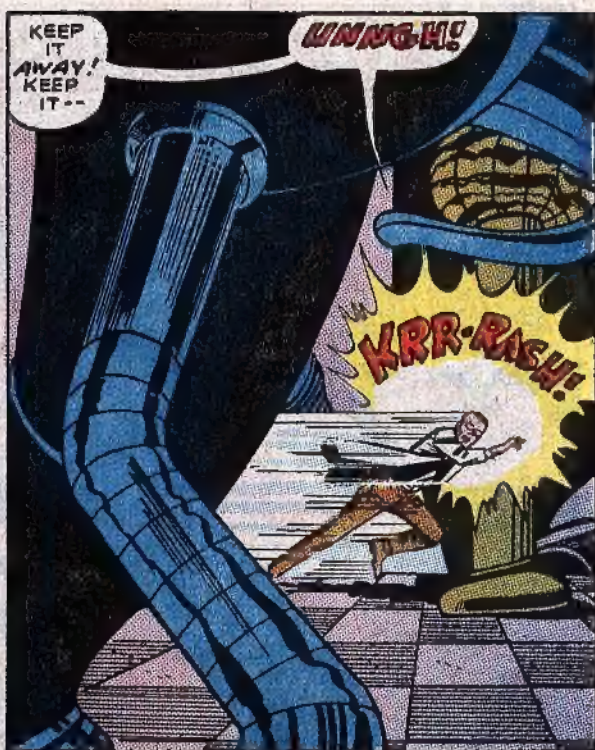


CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN

12¢



COME WITH US TO A TOP-SECRET GOVERNMENT INSTALLATION SOMEWHERE IN THE NEW MEXICO BADLANDS... COME WITH US TO A PLACE OF FEAR...



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ONE OF US IS A MADMAN!

STORY: DENNY O'NEIL
ART: JACK SPARLING
& VINCE COLLETTA

THIS BEGINS A SERIES OF EVENTS THAT WILL FORCE THE FOUR MEN INTO A LABYRINTH OF MADNESS--AND DEATH... YET, AT THIS MOMENT, THEY ARE UNAWARE OF THE TERRIFYING ADVENTURE WHICH LOOMS LESS THAN 24 HOURS AWAY...

I'D TAKE IT EASY IF I WERE YOU, RED! YOU'RE NOT THE YOUNG CIRCUS DARE-DEVIL YOU ONCE WERE! A MAN COULD BREAK HIS NECK DOING THAT STUNT!

MAYBE I WILL! WE'RE ALL LIVING ON BORROWED TIME ANYWAY...

...AND IT'D BE MORE FUN DYING LIKE THIS THAN DYING OF EYESTRAIN FROM READING TOO MANY SCREWY BOOKS--LIKE SOME PEOPLE!*

HOWDY, FLY-BOY! HOW'D THE TEST GO?

GREAT! THAT COPTER THE AIR FORCE LENT US FLIES SMOOTH AS A BABY'S CHEEK!

THE PHONE... PROBABLY SOME MOVIE STAR WANTIN' A DATE WITH ME!

YEAH A MOVIE STAR NAMED FLIPPER!

SAVE THE SNAPPY PATTERN, CLOWNS! IT COULD BE IMPORTANT!

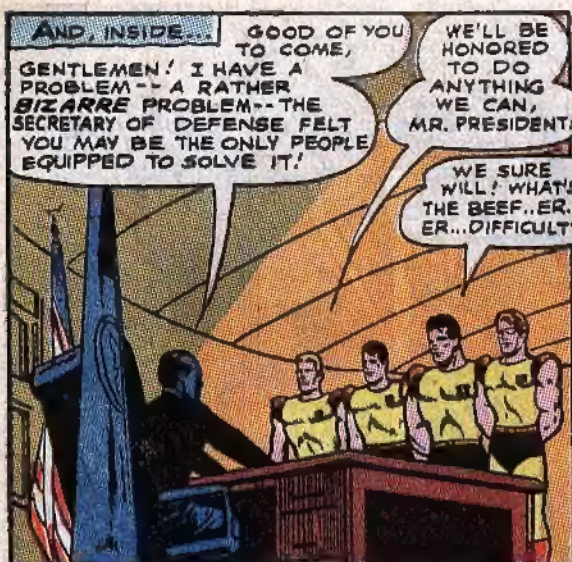
HUH--? YES, SIR! YES, SIR! WE'LL BE THERE BEFORE NOON...

WHASSAMATTER, ACE? YA LOOK LIKE YA SWALLOWED YOUR BRIDGEWORK!

THAT WAS... THE PRESIDENT! HE WANTS US AT THE WHITE HOUSE--PRONTO!

THUS, AN HOUR LATER, ACE MORGAN LANDS HIS BORROWED AIRCRAFT ON THE LAWN OF THE MOST FAMOUS MANSION IN THE NATION...

*FOUR STRANGERS WERE EN ROUTE TO BE AWARDED MEDALS FOR INDIVIDUAL ACTS OF HEROISM WHEN THEIR PLANE CRASHED. HAVING SURVIVED WHAT SHOULD'VE BEEN A FATAL ACCIDENT, THEY AGREED, SINCE THEY WERE LIVING ON BORROWED TIME, TO FORM THE CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN.

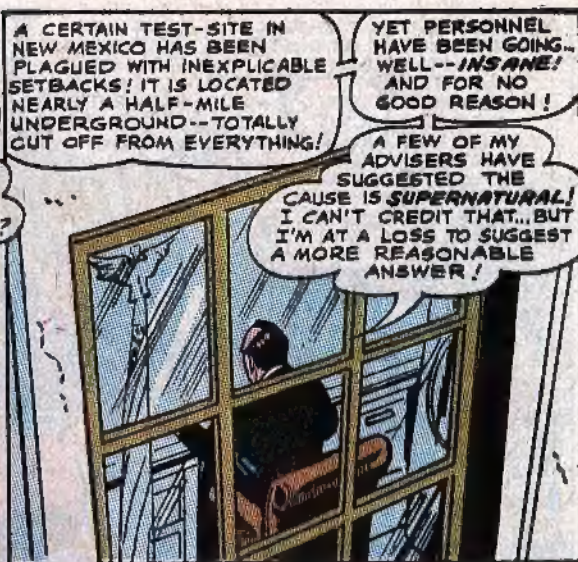


AND, INSIDE...

GOOD OF YOU TO COME, GENTLEMEN! I HAVE A PROBLEM-- A RATHER BIZARRE PROBLEM--THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FELT YOU MAY BE THE ONLY PEOPLE EQUIPPED TO SOLVE IT!

WE'LL BE HONORED TO DO ANYTHING WE CAN, MR. PRESIDENT!

WE SURE WILL! WHAT'S THE BEEF...ER...DIFFICULTY?



A CERTAIN TEST-SITE IN NEW MEXICO HAS BEEN PLAGUED WITH INEXPLICABLE SETBACKS! IT IS LOCATED NEARLY A HALF-MILE UNDERGROUND--TOTALLY CUT OFF FROM EVERYTHING!

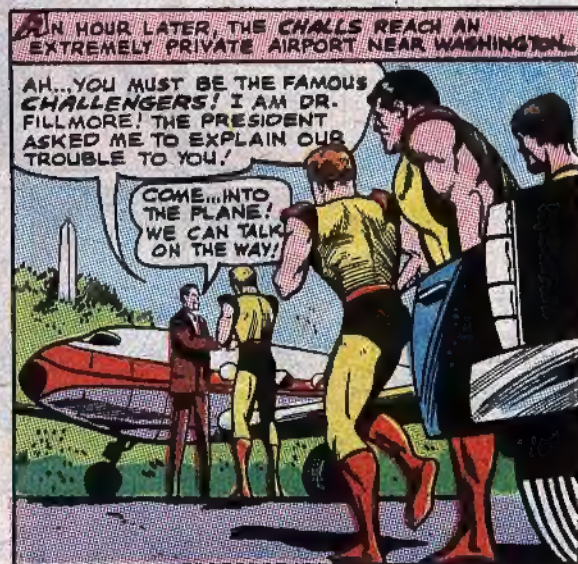
YET PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN GOING... WELL--*INSANE!* AND FOR NO GOOD REASON!

A FEW OF MY ADVISERS HAVE SUGGESTED THE CAUSE IS *SUPERNATURAL!* I CAN'T CREDIT THAT...BUT I'M AT A LOSS TO SUGGEST A MORE REASONABLE ANSWER!



I WAS HOPING I COULD PREVAIL UPON YOU TO INVESTIGATE! THIS MEANS A GREAT DEAL TO ME--AND TO THE PEACE AND SECURITY OF THE NATION!

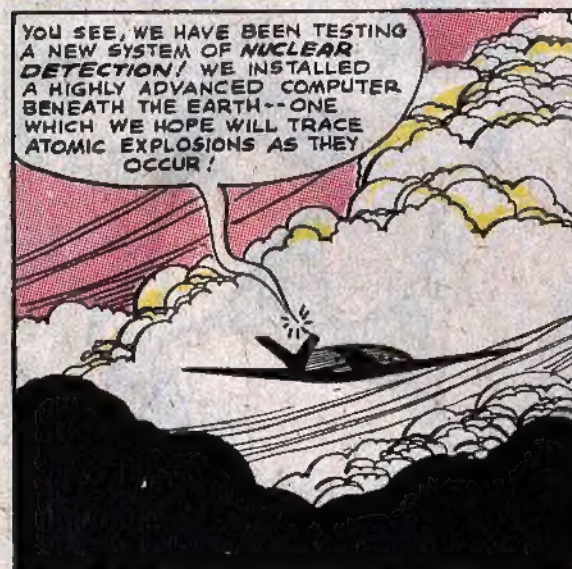
I'M SURE YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ON THE WAY TO THE SITE, YOU'LL BE THOROUGHLY BRIEFED! GOODBYE, GENTLEMEN, AND GOOD LUCK!



AN HOUR LATER, THE CHALLS REACH AN EXTREMELY PRIVATE AIRPORT NEAR WASHINGTON.

AH...YOU MUST BE THE FAMOUS CHALLENGERS! I AM DR. FILLMORE! THE PRESIDENT ASKED ME TO EXPLAIN OUR TROUBLE TO YOU!

COME...INTO THE PLANE! WE CAN TALK ON THE WAY!



YOU SEE, WE HAVE BEEN TESTING A NEW SYSTEM OF *NUCLEAR DETECTION!* WE INSTALLED A HIGHLY ADVANCED COMPUTER BENEATH THE EARTH--ONE WHICH WE HOPE WILL TRACE ATOMIC EXPLOSIONS AS THEY OCCUR!



...MY FELLOW SCIENTISTS HAVE BEEN DRIVEN OUT OF THEIR MINDS! ONLY I SEEM UNAFFECTED BY...BY WHATEVER IS DOWN THERE!



AS NIGHT FALLS, THE GRIM QUINTET COMES AT LAST TO THEIR DESTINATION...

THIS ELEVATOR WILL TAKE US DOWN TO THE LABORATORY!

THE JOINT AIN'T MUCH FOR CLASS, IS IT?

WHAT DID YOU EXPECT-- THE RITE?



YOU MIGHT EXPERIENCE PAIN FROM THE EXTREMELY HIGH PRESSURE AT THIS DEPTH!

AT LEAST, YA'D THINK THEY'D PUT WALLS ON THIS THING--!

L-LOOK... EITHER I'M FLIPPED-- OR WE ALREADY GOT TROUBLE!



WHAT IN THE NAME OF GRANDMA'S GOLD TOOTH-PICK IS IT?

BLAMED IF I KNOW--! BUT I DON'T LIKE IT!

GET READY TO FIGHT, GANG!

FIGHT THAT--? WHEN WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT WE'RE FIGHTING? BETTER TO LIVE AND FIGHT ANOTHER DAY! RIGHT NOW, I'D RATHER RUN! DR. FILLMORE-- HOW FAR TO THE BOTTOM?

AT LEAST 500 FEET!



SO WE AIN'T GOT A CHOICE! WE GOTTA TANGLE WITH IT! FOR OPENERS, LET'S SEE HOW IT LIKES A HANDFUL OF KNUCKLES...

YEOWW!



YOU OKAY, ROCKY?

I DUNNO... FEELS LIKE I SMACKED A SOLID WALL OF ELECTRICITY-- OR SOMETHING!

WATCH OUT--! IT'S COMING AT US!



HOPE PROF COMES UP
WITH AN IDEA QUICK!
I CAN'T KEEP DODGING
IN THIS NARROW
SPACE --



6

THIS IS IT! I FIGURED I
COULDN'T KEEP AVOIDING IT--
AN' I WAS RIGHT; BLAST IT!



ARMS... ARE... LIKE...
STEEL--! SQUEEZIN'
THE BREATH...
OUTTA ME...

...BLACKIN' OUT...
MAYBE FOR THE...
LAST TIME...



BLACKNESS SWELLS IN RED'S
MIND... BUT STILL, HIS SUPERBLY
TRAINED BODY STRUGGLES ON...
STRUGGLES HOPELESSLY...

(CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.)

MEXICAN BUG



Build this little bug, yourself! Revell's new 3-in-1 model of the famous Volkswagen can be built three ways. You can build it as the courageous "Inch Pincher Too." It was a spectator favorite in the tortuous Mexican 1,000 Rally, a race that pounds over the incredibly rough, mostly uninhabited, 1,000-mile mountain trail from Tijuana to La Paz. Or you can build it as a hot street-modified machine with EMPI speed equipment. Or you may want to build the ever-popular "stock" VW. Take your choice—they're all detailed, authentic, fun to build. Under \$2.00, wherever toys or hobbies are sold.

Send 35c for new 1969
color catalog of Revell
kits. Revell, Inc., 4397
Glencoe Avenue, Venice,
Calif. 90291.



April, 1969 • Model of the Month • Volkswagen "3 In 1" Kit



GRAB ON...
AND PULL!
WE'VE GOT
TO GET HIM
AWAY FROM
THAT THING!

NO...USE--!
IT'S TOO
BLAMED
STRONG!

LET ME
HELP...



...PERHAPS
ANOTHER
SET OF
ARMS--

BLASTED IDIOT! HE
WALKED RIGHT
INTO MY
ELBOW!

THE
THING'S
LETTING
GO!

UNNGH!



RED'S OUT COLD...BUT THERE
DOESN'T SEEM TO BE ANY
PERMANENT DAMAGE
TO HIM OR FILLMORE!

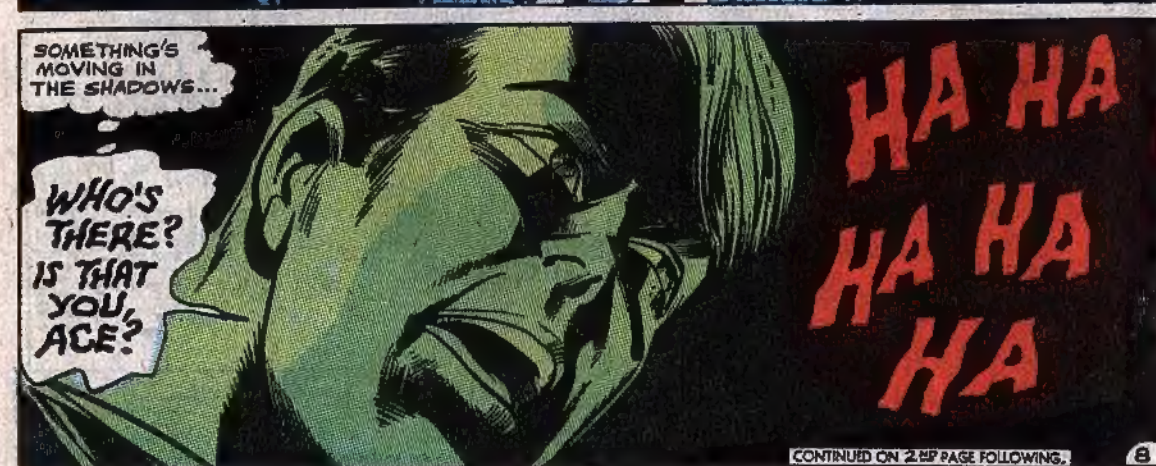
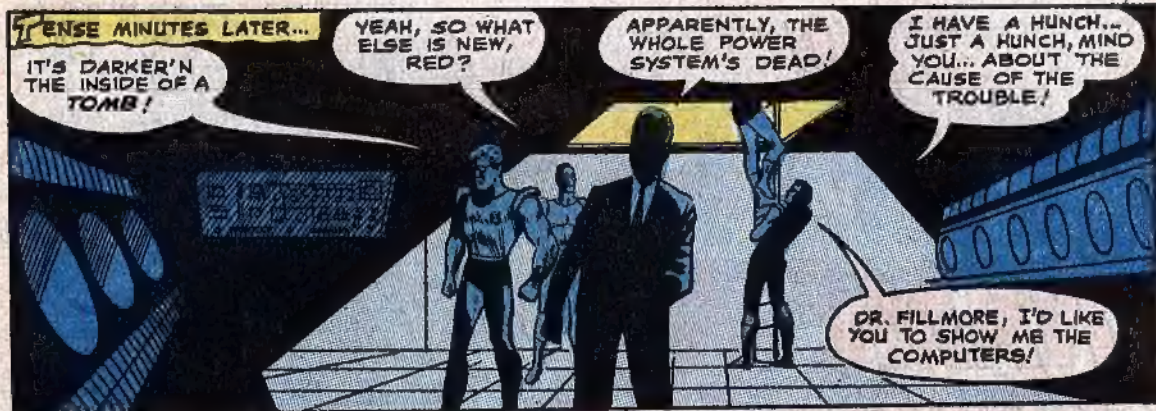
WE'VE
SEEN
THE
ENEMY!
NOW, WE'VE
GOT TO
LEARN
WHERE
IT
HIDES!



UNLESS I MISS MY
GUESS, WE'VE HAD ONLY
A SMALL SAMPLE OF
WHAT'S HIDING DOWN
HERE! THAT WRAITH,
HORRIFYING THOUGH
IT WAS, COULDN'T
DRIVE ME INSANE...

HEY--!
THESE
CONTROLS
DON'T
WORK!
WE'RE
STUCK!

WE'RE CLOSER TO THE
BOTTOM THAN TO THE
TOP...CLOSE ENOUGH
TO CLIMB DOWN THE
REST OF THE WAY!



SUDDENLY, A CLOAKED FIGURE KNIFES THROUGH THE DIMNESS, SPRINGS AND STRIKES...

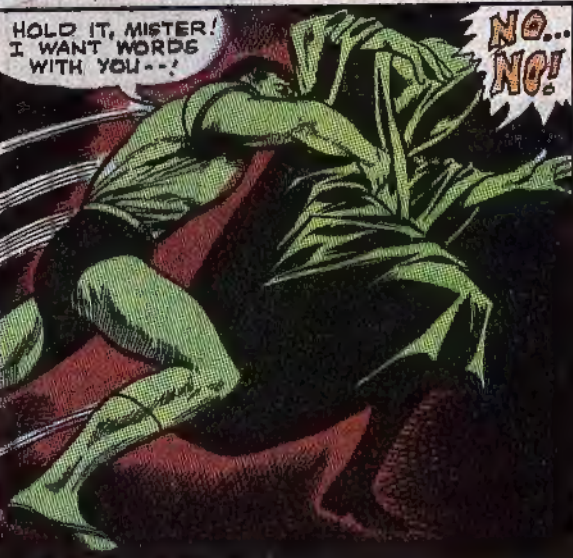
YEEOW!

AN INCH HIGHER,
AND MY HAND
WOULD'VE BEEN
AS BROKEN AS
THE FLASH...

IF THIS IS A
GHOST, IT'S THE
ONLY ONE THAT
EVER USED A
CROWBAR!



NO SPOOK...
THAT WAS FLESH
AND BONE I
JUST BASHED!



HOLD IT, MISTER!
I WANT WORDS
WITH YOU--!

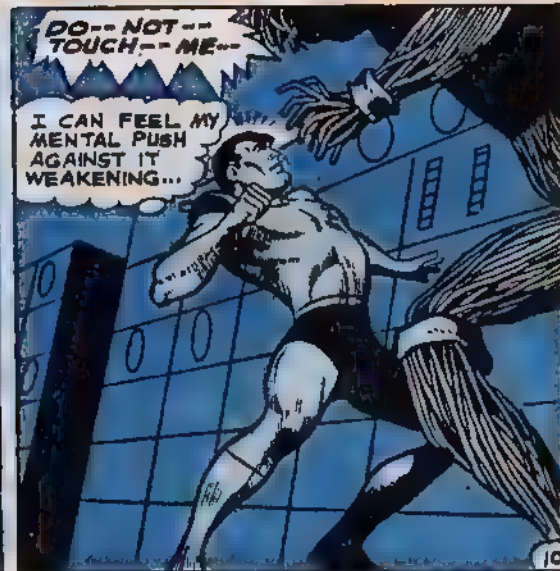
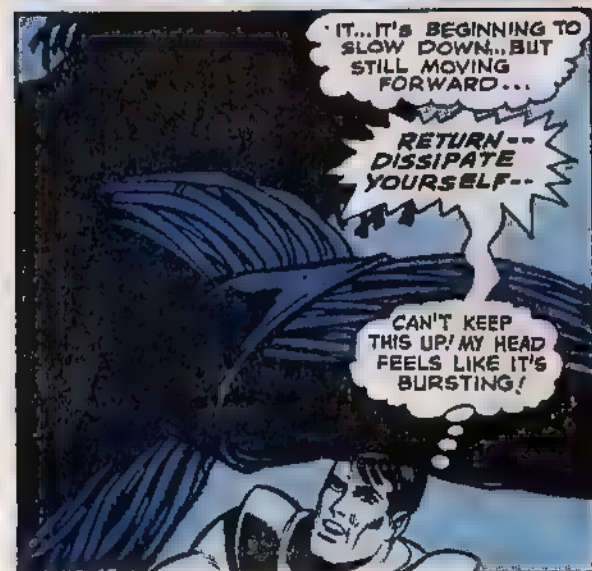
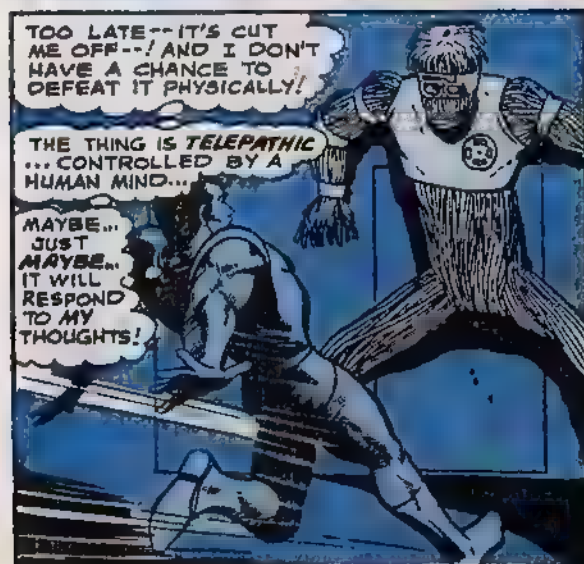


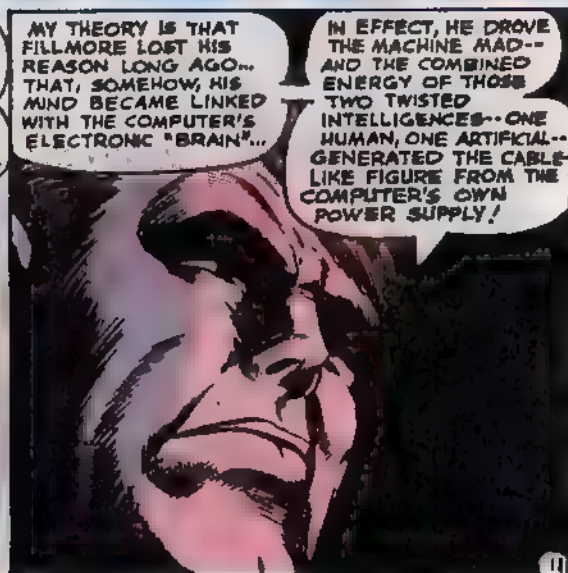
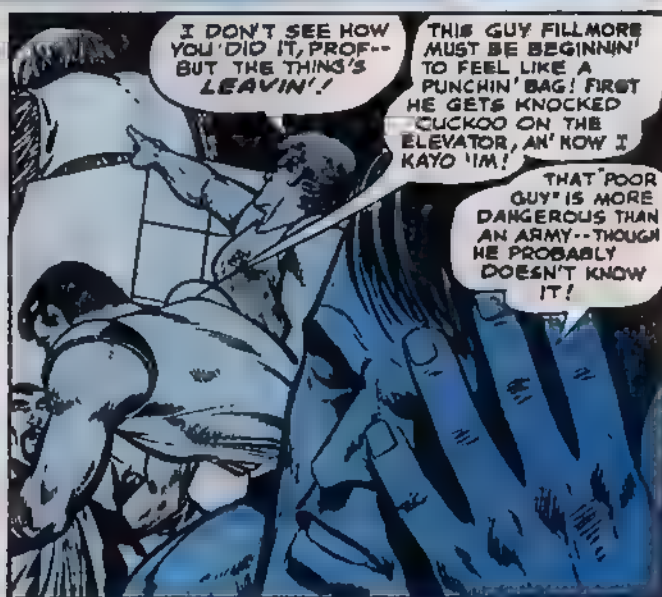
HE'S POWERFUL-- WITH THE STRENGTH
OF MADNESS... AND HE'S GETTING
AWAY...

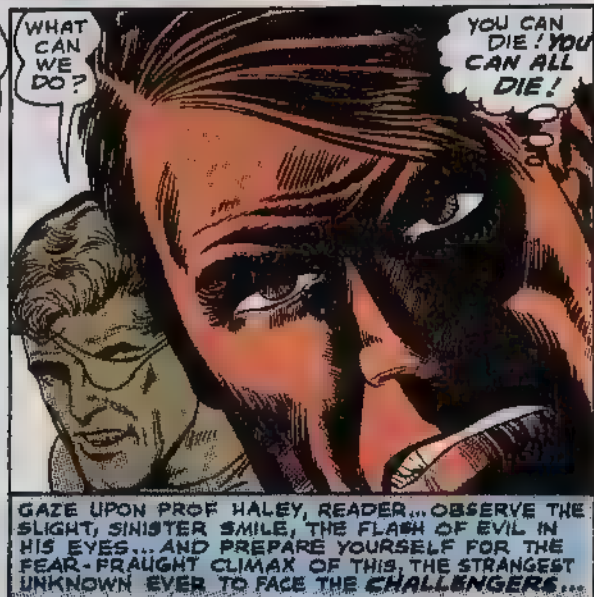
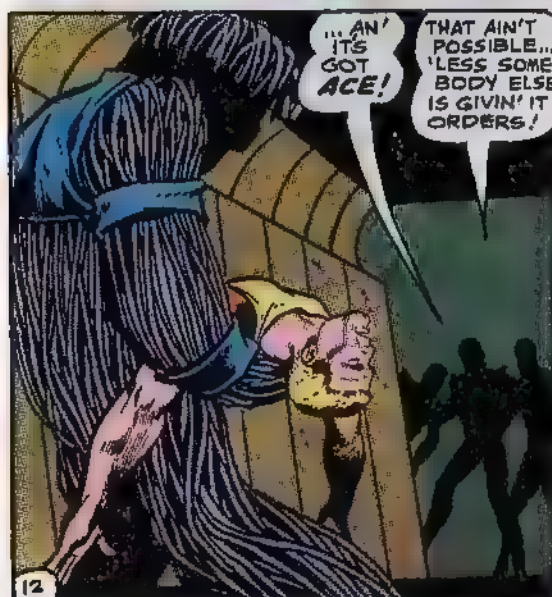
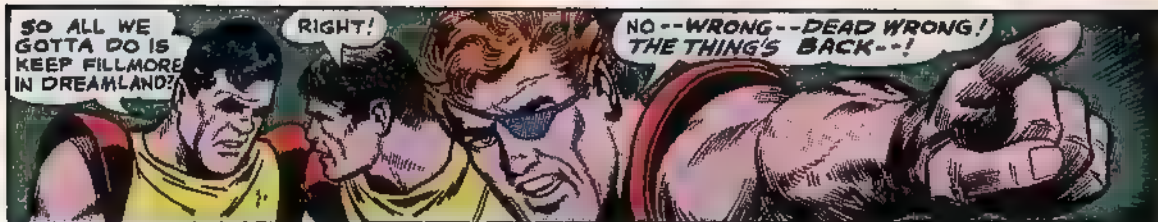
...LEAVING
ME HOLDING
NOTHING BUT
HIS DISGUISE!



...AN ORDINARY BED SHEET!
IT'D BE ALMOST FUNNY... IF
HE WASN'T SO DEADLY!





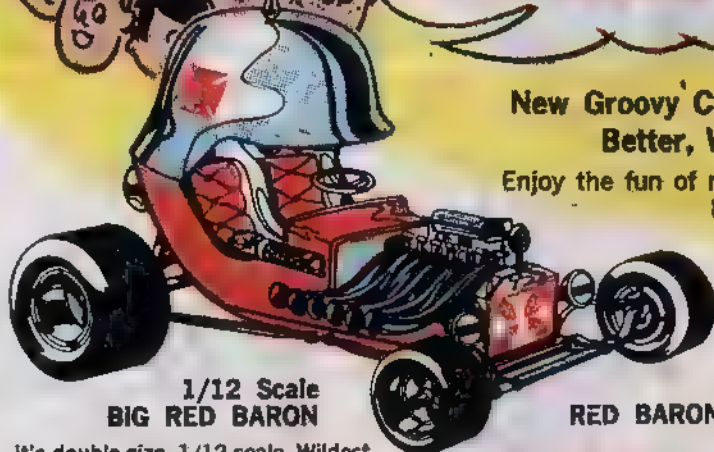


Oh Boy! It's the **BIG RED BARON**

New Groovy Custom Show Rod—Bigger
Better, Wackier Than Ever!

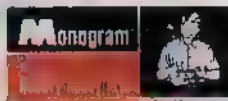
Enjoy the fun of making and owning a bold and
brassy Red Baron

Get a kit at
your favorite
store



**1/12 Scale
BIG RED BARON**

It's double size. 1/12 scale. Wildest
and wackiest custom show model of the year.
Top is giant chromed spike helmet. German
canteen gas tank. Spandau machine guns. Hun-
in-the-sun red body. Miniature Fokker Triplane
model included. \$6.00



RED BARON



1/24 Scale

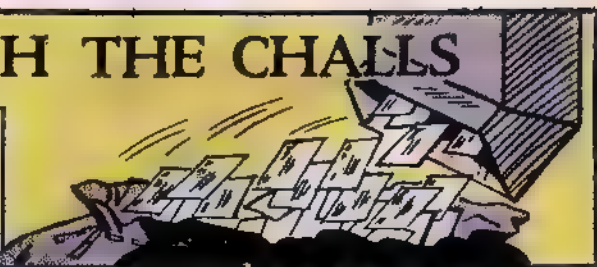
Same as the Big Red Baron—
same features — same complete
detailing — except smaller size.
\$2.00

Monogram Models, Inc., Subsidiary of Mattel, Inc., Morton Grove, Illinois.

LET'S CHAT WITH THE CHALLS

Address all mail to:
CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN
National Periodical Publications
909 Third Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10022

B175



Dear Editor:

Since Jack Sparling's handiwork is evident in many features in the DC line, may I suggest that he draw the pencils only, leaving the final inking to another artist? This is none of my business, really, but I thought this idea might prove to have enough merit for your consideration.

Frank Haggerty, Detroit, Mich.

You hit the drawing pin right on the head, Frank. Since sparking Jack Sparling is such a heavy contributor, with so many demands for his work by our offices as well as others in allied art fields, we decided to implement this Jack-of-all-arts. Beginning with this issue, his work will be interpreted in ink by Vincent Colletta.

"Invincible Vince," as we laughingly refer to this prematurely white-thatched, stocky, perennially smiling suburbanite from New Jersey, should be no stranger to comics fans. After several semesters at Newark's Academy of Fine Arts, he barreled into the business with a clutch of assignments from a host of publishers. But Vince stepped into the Big Time when he went to work for DC exclusively.

On the assumption that he could improve his turn-out by packaging magazines for individual publishers, he set up his own office, combining his output by photographing covers. For reasons that he prefers to keep to himself, Vince closed the shop and came back to the welcome arms of DC.

For the time being, he has asked to remain on inks only in order to spread and diversify his enormous talents. To which we—and hopefully, our readers—agree. Working with machine-like speed and precision that doesn't impair his creativity, Vince, at the same time, gives credit where credit is due. His two teen daughters and single son erase all the pages before delivery to our offices while his wife feeds the family vitamin pills.—Ed.

Dear Editor:

Whenever a reader asks for the Challengers' names, what do you tell them? All you say is that they are Ace Morgan, Rocky Davis, Red Ryan, and Prof Haley. It's obvious these are only nicknames. As far as I can see, in going through all my issues, you've never really created first names for them.

Well, I can't ask you to do everything, so I've taken it upon myself to create names for them.

What do you think of the names of Scott Morgan, William Davis, Allen Ryan and Robert Haley?

Gary Skinner, Columbus, Ohio

Okay, all you Challenger chums, what do you think?
—Ed.

Dear Editor:

I would like to add my voice to the many others that have clamored for reprints of old CHALLENGERS tales. In a recent issue, you stated that you wanted to "forge ahead" with new stories. Well, my suggestion could meet both sides. Why not have a CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN Annual or quarterly like the Infantino Special? Please print this so that others can write in to state how they feel about it. To me, this seems to be the perfect answer. Would you seriously consider my proposal?

Eric Nash, New York City

A similar letter from James Streich of Bay City, Mich., prompts us to print the above. Anybody want to second the motion?—Ed.

Dear Editor:

How about a pin-up of Tino? It'd be great!

Vicki Wolford, Gonzales, Texas

Dear Editor:

O inconsistencies of inconsistencies! An error that has outraged my love for realism in comics! In #63, Tino has a Beatle bob, a handsome, teenage face, and stood not less than six inches lower than his brother. In #66, he had a conservative haircut, looked about ten, was much more juvenile, and stood about a foot shorter than Red. Tino's main attraction (to me, at least) is the fact that he is a teenage idol and that he seems at least 18. A juvenile can be found in any comics, a maturing teenager in very few. So I offer this plea: Make Tino more mature, at least 18, and more "with it." Make him a swinger!

Dear Editor: Bev Kirkham, Puyallup, Wash.

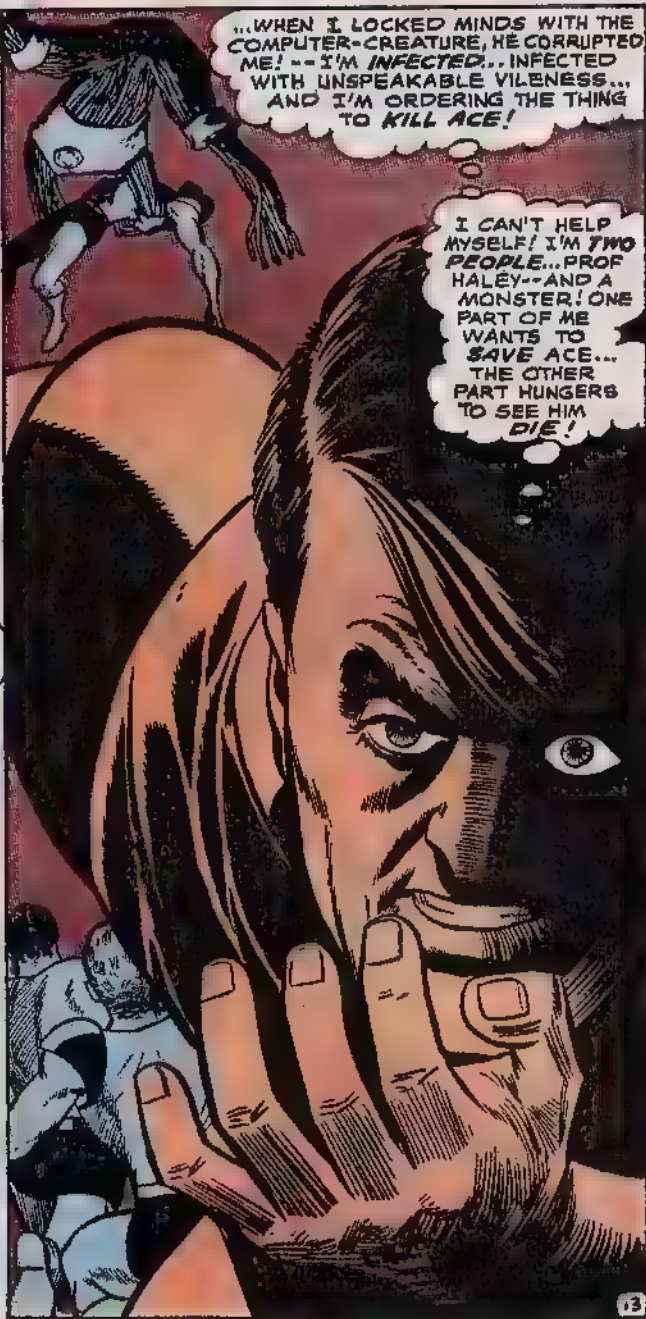
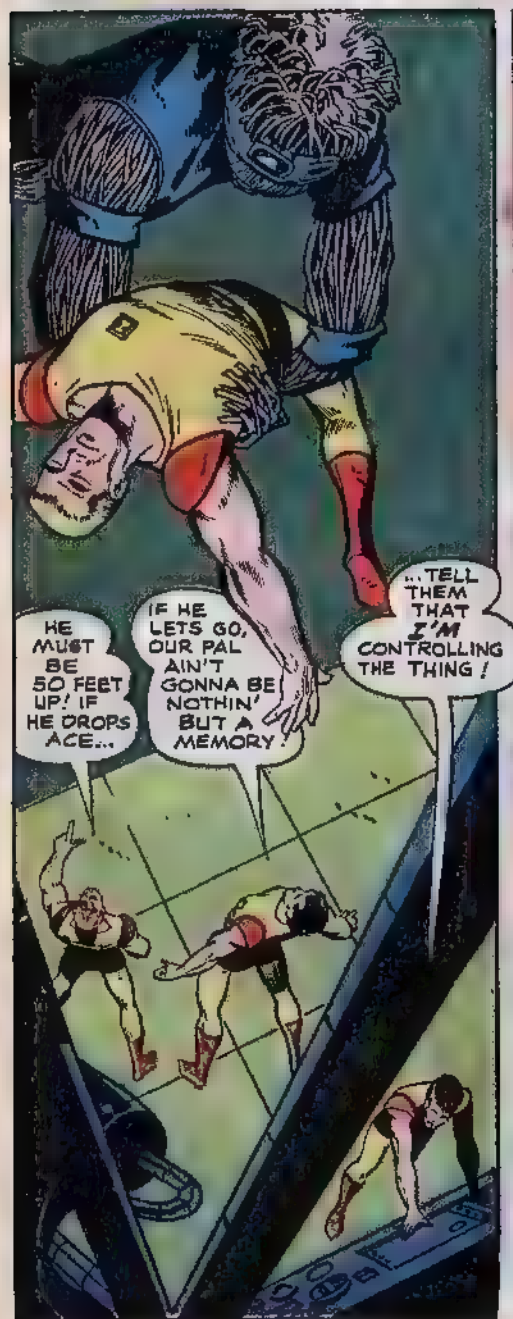
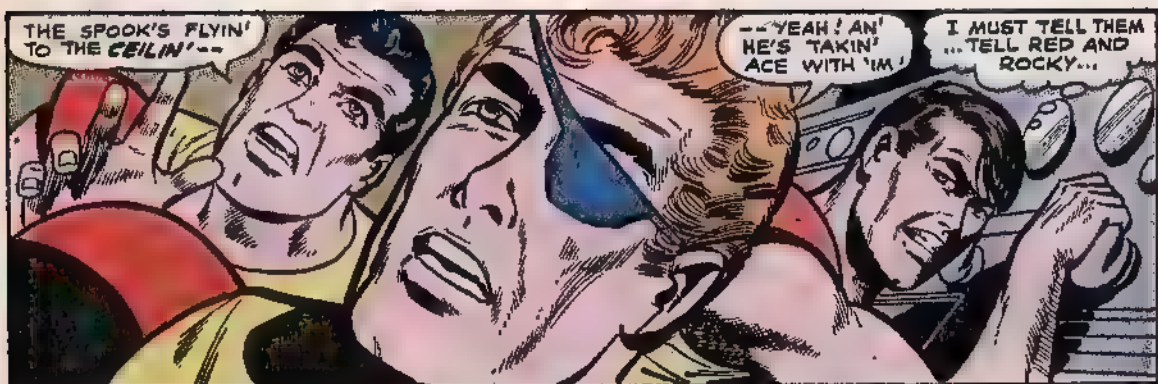
Tino is like cool, groovy, way out, sounds like a teenager. Please print a picture of him.

Dear Editor: Jan Boli, Grand Haven, Mich.

I like Tino so very much, I hope you continue to keep him around. Maybe one of these days, you'll startle us by making him a regular Challenger. Can I also squeeze in a compliment? Joe Kubert's covers are eyecatching and colorful, real OK Kubert!

Billy Parker, Greenville, S.C.

To Vicki, Bev, Jan, Billy and the whole chorus that's been chanting about tempestuous Tino, your comments have been duly noted. A note to the effect has been flashed to the artist to tack onto his drawing board as a vivid reminder.—Ed.





LIKE WE THOUGHT--
ACE IS FALLIN'!
AN' THERE'S NOTHIN'
WE CAN DO--EXCEPT
WATCH!

MAYBE
YOU'RE HELPLESS,
OL' BUDDY,
BUT I'M NOT! IT'S GONNA
HURT...



...HURT LOTS--
BUT I'M GONNA
PLAY CUSHION!



AGGH!

WITH BONE-CRUSHING FORCE, THE
INERT FORM SMASHES INTO HIS
BRAWNY, COURAGEOUS COMPANION.



DON'T STAND THERE, PROF! DO SOMETHING! ROCKY'S HURT-- BAD!

IT'S STOPPED! THE WEIGHT OF EVIL PRESSING ON MY MIND HAS LIFTED! BUT...BUT FOR HOW LONG?

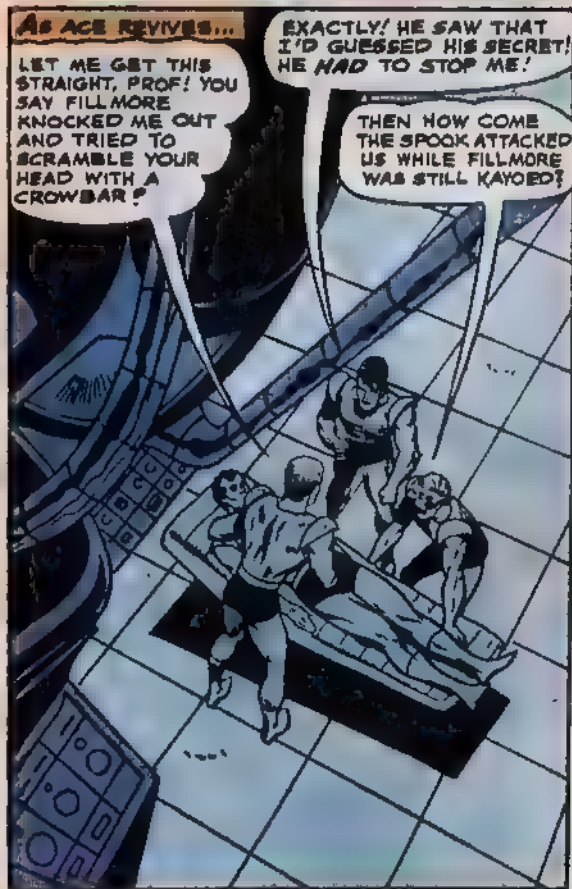
THERE MUST BE A FIRST-AID KIT AROUND HERE! I'LL GET IT!



ACE IS ONLY DAZED... A WHIFF OF OLD-FASHIONED SMELLING SALTS SHOULD BRING HIM AROUND!

ROCKY NEEDS MAJOR MEDICAL ATTENTION! I'M NOT CERTAIN... BUT I THINK HE'S HEMORRHAGING! AND HIS SKULL MIGHT BE FRACTURED!

WHA... WHERE AM I? WH--WHAT HAPPENED?

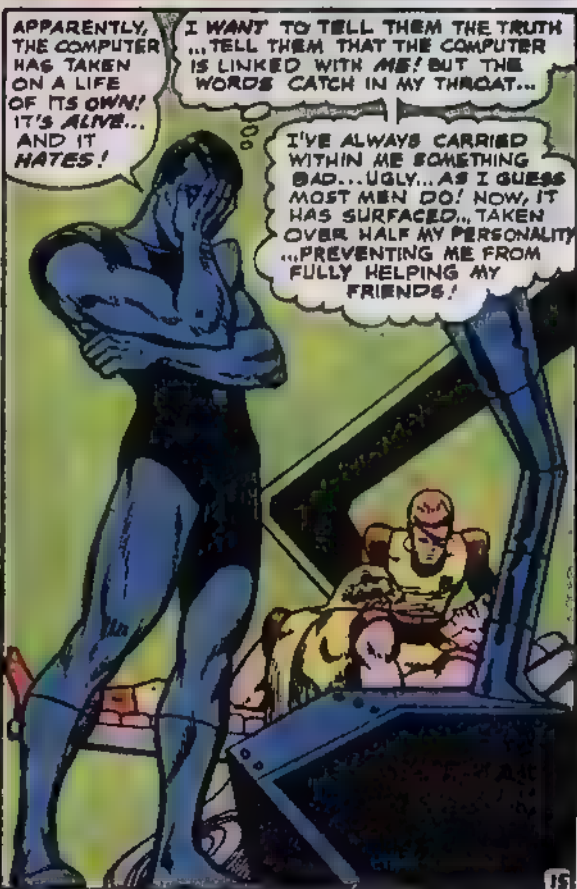


As ACE REVIVES...

LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT, PROF! YOU SAY FILLMORE KNOCKED ME OUT AND TRIED TO SCRAMBLE YOUR HEAD WITH A CROWBAR?

EXACTLY! HE SAW THAT I'D GUESSED HIS SECRET! HE HAD TO STOP ME!

THEN HOW COME THE SPOOK ATTACKED US WHILE FILLMORE WAS STILL KAYOED?



APPARENTLY, THE COMPUTER HAS TAKEN ON A LIFE OF ITS OWN! IT'S ALIVE... AND IT HATES!

I WANT TO TELL THEM THE TRUTH... TELL THEM THAT THE COMPUTER IS LINKED WITH ME! BUT THE WORDS CATCH IN MY THROAT...

I'VE ALWAYS CARRIED WITHIN ME SOMETHING BAD... UGLY... AS I GUESS MOST MEN DO! NOW, IT HAS SURFACED... TAKEN OVER HALF MY PERSONALITY... PREVENTING ME FROM FULLY HELPING MY FRIENDS!

LET'S FACE IT, FELLERS! WE'RE VIRTUALLY CAPTIVES OF THAT FACELESS MACHINE! AND ROCKY NEEDS HOSPITAL ATTENTION, PRONTO! WE GOTTA CRASH OUT OF THIS HOLE!

THE COMPUTER WILL NEVER LET US USE THE ELEVATOR! IF WE TRY TO CLIMB, WE'LL BE HELPLESS AGAINST THE WEIRDIE!

RIGHT! SO FIRST WE HAVE TO ELIMINATE THE MACHINE AND ITS SERVANT! AS I UNDERSTAND IT, THE WRAITH IS BASICALLY ELECTRICAL ENERGY...

HOLD ON, ACE! THE WRAITH IS A FORM OF ELECTRICITY-- BUT WE DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF FORM! YOU THINK WHEN IT TOUCHES THE WIRE, IT'LL BE DRAINED AWAY LIKE A LIGHTNING BOLT IS DRAINED INTO A METAL ROD...

...WHICH GIVES ME AN IDEA! MAYBE IF WE WRAP OURSELVES IN SOME OF THAT COPPER WIRE, WE'LL BE PROTECTED AGAINST--

...WELL, I DON'T!

BLAST IT, PROF--WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING! WE CAN'T SIT AROUND ON OUR PINKIES AND LET ROCKY DIE!

GIVE ME A BETTER PLAN, AND I'LL BE HAPPY TO GO ALONG WITH IT!

I DON'T HAVE A BETTER PLAN...

THEN LET'S GET MOVING WITH *MINE*! AND IF IT KILLS US, I'LL APOLOGIZE!

HEY, GUYS, LOOK WHAT I FOUND!

THIS SURE IS BIG-TIME SECURITY STUFF! THEY'RE SET TO BLOW THIS JOINT TO SMITHERBENS-- ALONG WITH ANY SPIES WHO MIGHT BE AROUND!

THOSE EXPLOSIVE STICKS MAY BE JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED! GET 'EM UNWIRED, PAL!

DESTRUCT

FEVERISH MOMENTS LATER, THE TRIO ARE READY FOR THEIR IMPOSSIBLY DANGEROUS TASK...

WE'LL SPLIT UP! I'LL TAKE THE SIDE CORRIDOR...



BUT SO INTENT ARE THEY THAT THEY DO NOT NOTICE FILLMORE STIR, RISE...

YOU GUYS GO IN FROM THE FRONT AND BACK...



...AND MOVE STEALTHILY OFF...

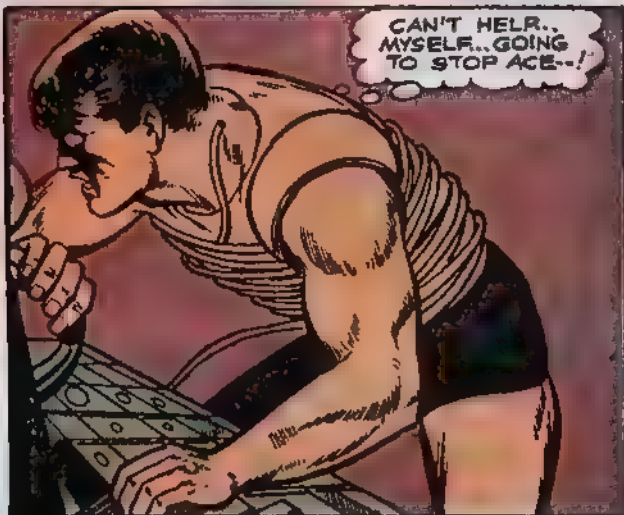
REMEMBER, DON'T HESITATE! TOSS THOSE EXPLOSIVES AS SOON AS YOU GET WITHIN RANGE--!



IT...IT'S HAPPENING AGAIN! I CAN FEEL THE EVIL WELLING UP WITHIN ME... FEEL IT SEIZING MY MIND--!



CAN'T HELP.. MYSELF.. GOING TO STOP ACE--!



AT THAT INSTANT, THE HUGE METAL BARRIERS PROF ACTIVATES SLAM INTO PLACE-- CUTTING OFF ACE'S EXIT-- LEAVING HIM TRAPPED!





AND THIS
LITTLE TOOL
WILL SERVE
RED!

HEY,
RED, COME
HERE! I
SEE SOME-
THING
STRANGE!



THIS BETTER BE
IMPORTANT!
WE CAN'T
WASTE TIME!

OH, IT *IS*
IMPORTANT!
IT'S A MATTER
OF LIFE--OR
DEATH--



--YOUR
DEATH!

LOOK, OVER
THERE!

WHAT'RE YOU TALKIN'
ABOUT? I DON'T
SEE ANYTHING--!



BUT BEFORE PROF CAN GLICE THE HEAVY
BLADE DOWNWARD, A STICKY, STINGING
FOAM SHOWERS HIS EYES...

HEE HEE
HEE HEE
HEE HEE --
FORGOT
ABOUT ME,
EH?

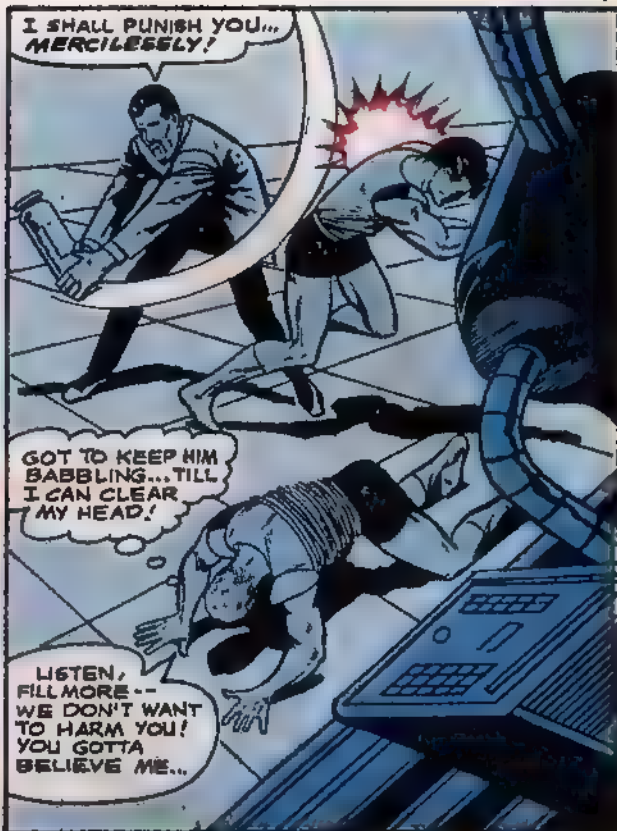
FILLMORE!

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

LIKE ALL THE OTHERS... YOU INVADE MY DOMAIN... BUT YOU'RE WORSE! YOU TAKE AWAY THE LOVE OF MY COMPUTER... NO LONGER DOES MY BIDDING --!



I SHALL PUNISH YOU... MERCILESSLY!



GOT TO KEEP HIM BABBLING... TILL I CAN CLEAR MY HEAD!

LISTEN, FILLMORE -- WE DON'T WANT TO HARM YOU! YOU GOTTA BELIEVE ME...

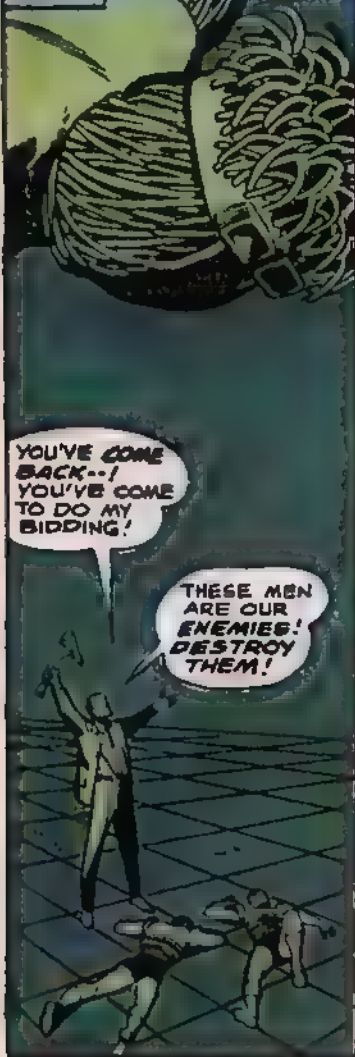
LIES! ALL LIES! YOU LIE TO ME! -- ROBERT FILLMORE WILL NOT BE LIED TO!



THIS IS WHAT I NEED -- TO SILENCE YOU FOREVER!



THEN, THERE IS A FAINT
CRACKLING IN THE MUSTY AIR,
AND...



YOU'VE COME
BACK--! YOU'VE COME
TO DO MY
BIDDING!

THESE MEN
ARE OUR
ENEMIES!
DESTROY
THEM!

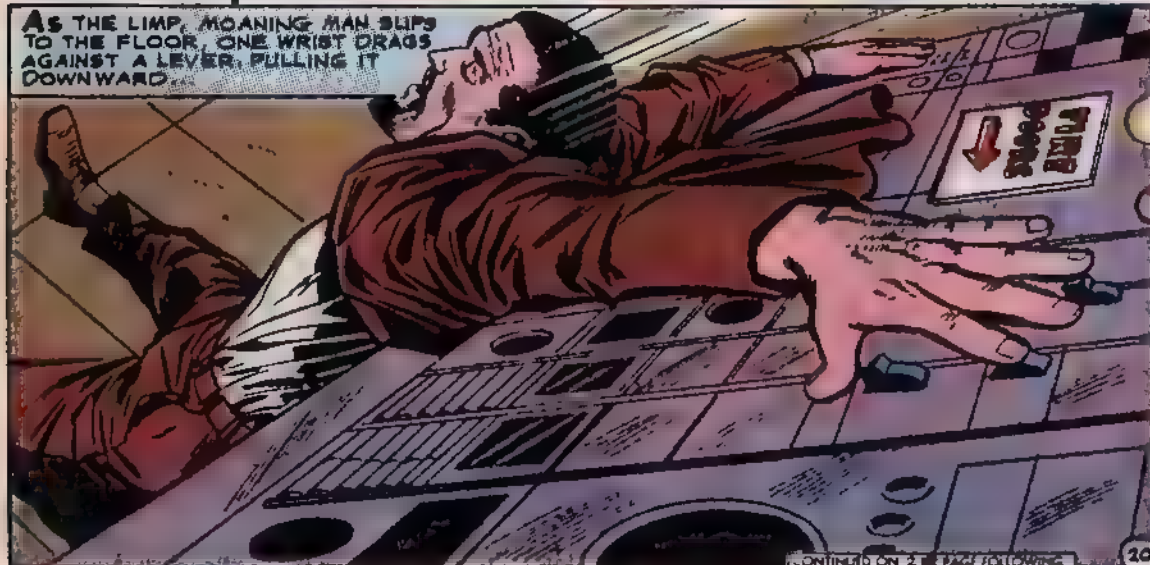


NOT
ME--
THEM...

WITH A SPASM OF ITS UNEARTHLY FORM,
THE COMPUTER-CREATURE FLINGS THE
BEWILDERED FILLMORE ACROSS THE
CHAMBER, SMASHING HIM INTO THE
MASTER CONTROL BOARD...



AS THE LIMP, MOANING MAN SLIPS
TO THE FLOOR, ONE WRIST DRAGS
AGAINST A LEVER, PULLING IT
DOWNWARD...



CONTINUED ON 2nd PAGE FOLLOWING

AND,
A
FEW
DOZEN
FEET
AWAY,
THE
HEAVY
METAL
BARRIERS
PENNING
ACE,
OPEN...

WITHOUT
HESITATION,
THE
CHALLENGER
LEAPS
FORWARD
TOWARD
THE
DISTANT,
HUMMING
MECHANICAL
BRAIN...

THE WRAITH ACTED
TO SAVE MY LIFE!
OBVIOUSLY, IT
PREFERS ME
TO BE EVIL!...

I WILL NOT
DISAPPOINT
IT!

RED STILL SLEEPS! HE WILL
NOT AWAKE--NOT EVER!

WATCH ME,
WRAITH! I
PLACE ONE
END OF THE
BARE WIRE
AGAINST MY
ALLY'S SKIN...

...AND WHEN I TOUCH THE OTHER
END TO THAT LIVE ELECTRIC
TERMINAL, THOUSANDS OF VOLTS
WILL SNUFF OUT HIS LIFE!

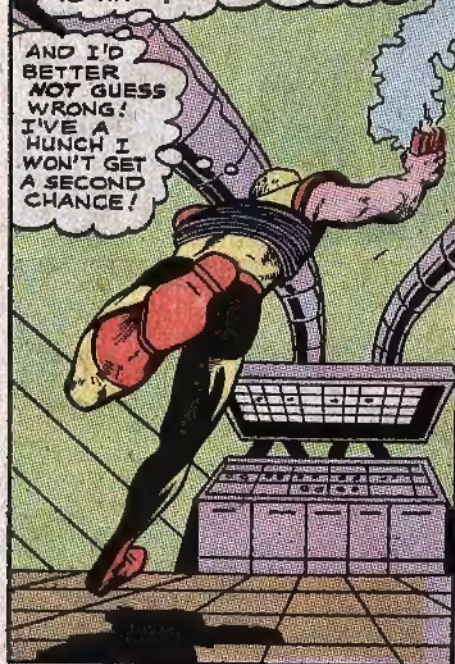
I AM SAVORING
THIS... I AM
FILLED WITH AN
ENJOYMENT
THAT FALES
ANY PLEASURE
I HAD BEFORE!

FAREWELL,
RED RYAN!
FAREWELL...

BUT, EVEN AS THE DERANGED CHALLENGER INCHES THE WIRE FORWARD FOR CONTACT...

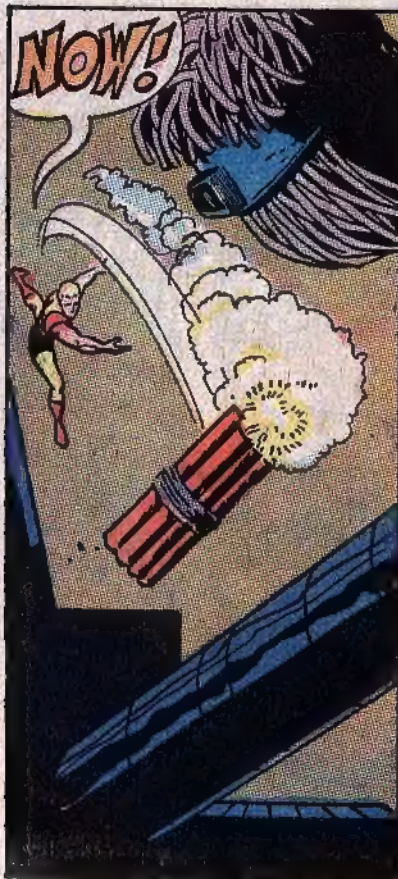
I DON'T HAVE PROF'S SCIENTIFIC KNOW-HOW... I CAN ONLY GUESS WHICH PART OF THE CONTRAPTION TO HIT--!

AND I'D BETTER NOT GUESS WRONG! I'VE A HUNCH I WON'T GET A SECOND CHANCE!



THE SPOOK--! SOMEHOW IT MUST SENSE MY INTENTION! I'M TOO WEAK FROM MY LAST RUN-IN WITH IT TO PUT UP MUCH FIGHT...

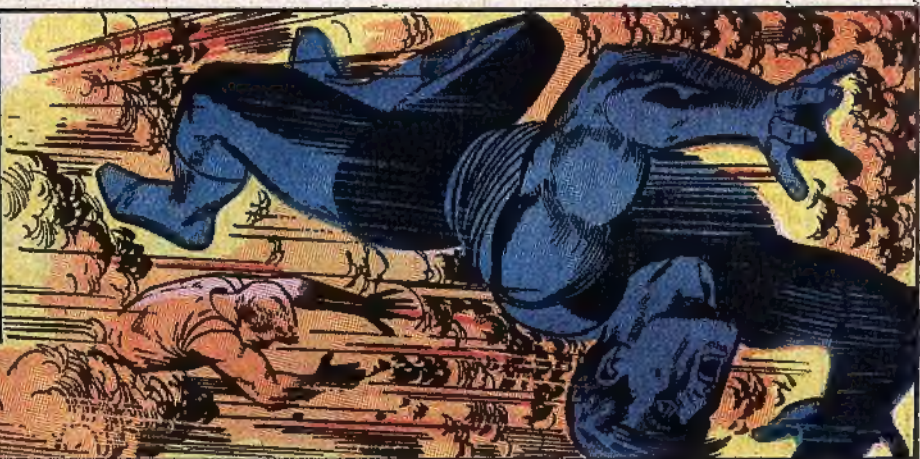
SO IF I'M GOING TO DO MY COMPUTER-KILLING, I'LL HAVE TO DO IT--



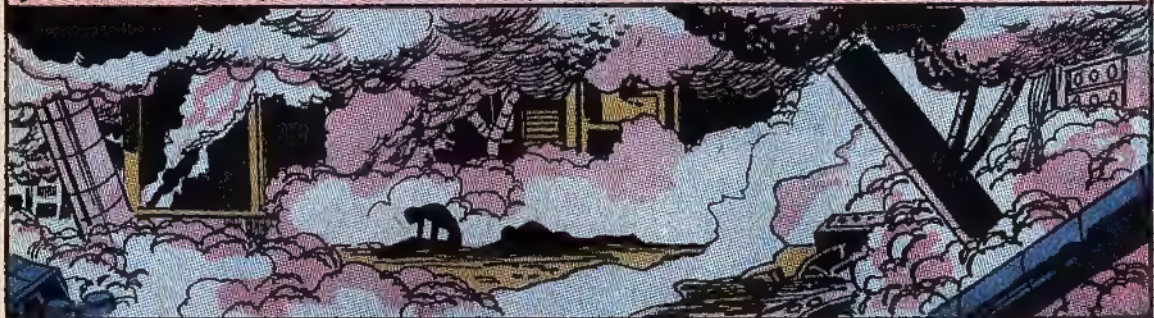
THE EXPLOSIVES ARC TOWARD THE COMPUTER'S METAL SHELL, AND...



WITH TIDAL-WAVE FORCE, THE EXPLOSION RIPS THROUGH THE UNDERGROUND CHAMBERS! IT SNATCHES UP PROF AND HURLS HIM AWAY FROM THE CONTROL BOARD A MICRO-SECOND BEFORE HE ACCOMPLISHES HIS DEADLY PURPOSE...



FOR MANY MINUTES, THERE IS NO SOUND, SAVE THE CREAKING OF STRAINED GIRDERS...



AND, FINALLY...

Y-YOU GUYS OKAY?

I...I THINK SO! WHAT HAPPENED? LAST THING I REMEMBER IS TANGLING WITH FILLMORE...

WE'LL EXPLAIN LATER! RIGHT NOW, WE HAVE A LONG CLIMB TO MAKE!



THOUGH THEIR MUSCLES SCREAM WITH PAIN, THE CHALLENGERS FORM A MAKESHIFT STRETCHER FOR ROCKY, AND BEGIN THE AGONIZING JOURNEY BACK UP...

NO SIGN OF EITHER FILLMORE OR THE SPOOK! THEY MUST'VE BOUGHT IT WHEN I BLEW THE COMPUTER!

BETTER SAVE YOUR BREATH!

YEAH... AND BE THANKFUL YA STILL HAVE IT!



FOURS... HOURS
 FILLED WITH
 NUMBING ACHE
 AND GRIM
 DETERMINATION...
 HOURS AS LONG
 AS CENTURIES
 PASS-- AND, AT
 LAST, THEY
 EMERGE INTO
 A BLEAK
 DAWN...

GET THIS MAN TO THE
 BASE HOSPITAL, SOLDIER!
MOVE!

OUR INSTRUMENTS SHOWED
 A TERRIFIC BLAST! WE
 THOUGHT YOU'D ALL
 BEEN KILLED--!

SAVE THE QUESTIONS,
 PAL! THE WHOLE STORY
 WILL APPEAR IN OUR
 REPORT!

I
 HAVE
 A
 CONFESSION--

HOLD IT, PROF!
 ISN'T THAT
 THE
SPOOK?

WE'RE PROBABLY
 SEEING THINGS...
 WITH THE COMPUTER
 GONE, THAT THING
 COULDN'T
 HAVE SURVIVED!

NOW, WHAT
 WERE YOU
 SAYING,
 PROF?

N-NOTHING...

HOW CAN I TELL THEM--?
 IT'S STILL ALIVE! I CAN
 FEEL THE EVIL WITHIN
 ME!-- GNAWING AT MY VERY
 SOUL!

THUS ARE THE CHALLENGERS FREED-- NO LONGER
 CAPTIVES OF THE FACELESS. BUT ONE OF THEIR
 NUMBER IS CAPTIVE OF A FAR MORE DREADFUL
 BEING-- **HIMSELF!** AND HE WONDERS AND
 WORRIES WHAT HORRORS LIE AHEAD...

THE
 END

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Mercury Cougar
 No. K-21
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THE SPECTRE appeared in More Fun Comics from issue No. 52 (Feb., 1940) through issue No. 101 (Jan.-Feb., 1945). He also appeared in solo adventures in issues Nos. 1 and 2 (Summer & Fall, 1940) of All-Star Comics. When the Justice Society of America strip took over the All-Star title starting with issue No. 3 (Winter, 1940/41), The Spectre became a charter member of that organization and appeared in every issue through No. 23 (Winter, 1944/45). After his last appearance in More Fun No. 101, The Spectre was not to be seen again until his revival in the 60th issue of Showcase (Jan.-Feb., 1966). He subsequently appeared in issues No. 61 (Mar.-Apr., 1966) and No. 64 (Sept.-Oct., 1966) of Showcase, as well as in two team-up appearances—with the Flash and Batman—in The Brave And The Bold (Nos. 72 and 75) and in one of the annual JLA-JSA spectaculars in the Justice League Of America magazine—"Crisis Between Earth-One and Earth-Two" (JLA Nos. 46 and 47). Finally, the Astral Avenger starred in a magazine of his own, the first issue of which was dated Nov.-Dec., 1967, with the last issue being No. 10 (May-June, 1969).

The two-part Spectre origin story, which appeared in More Fun Comics Nos. 52 and 53, was written by Jerry Siegel and illustrated by Bernard Bailey, as were most of the early Spectre adventures. The tale related how police detective Jim Corrigan and his fiancée Clarice Winston were kidnapped by the "Gat" Benson gang. Corrigan had been cracking down on Benson's criminal activities, and now the gangster was out for revenge. They sealed the detective in a barrel of cement and dumped him in the river...and Jim Corrigan died! However, in the next world a mysterious Voice informed him that his work on Earth was not yet finished. Corrigan's ghost was returned to Earth with fantastic powers at his command. He arrived back at "Gat" Benson's hideout just in time to prevent his fiancée's murder and arrest Benson.

Realizing there could be no marriage between a ghost and a mortal, Jim, or rather his ghost, broke his engagement to Clarice. Wishing to keep his Jim Corrigan identity as cover, the ghost created the costume and identity of The Spectre, which he employed in his spectral battles against the forces of evil. However, The Spectre longed for the eternal rest that should have been his by right of death. Taking his dilemma to the mysterious Voice which counseled him, he was given the choice of everlasting rest in the next world or an eternity of fighting evil in this world. The matter was finally decided when Jim chose to remain in this world in order to save the life of his former fiancée, Clarice, whom he still loved. The Spectre did eventually get a measure of solace, however, when the powers from beyond restored to life his true body, which had rested on the river's bottom all this time. Much to his, or rather *their* surprise, Jim and The Spectre discovered that the supernatural entity still existed and, although they were in some way still mystically joined, The Spectre could emerge from Jim's body and live a separate existence of his own.

Issue No. 74 of More Fun saw the introduction of

Percival Popp, The Super Cop into the Spectre series, and the strip would never be the same for the rest of its run. After the great surge and subsequent overabundance of super-hero and costumed crimefighter strips in the late 1930's and early 1940's, the comic book creators of that era began to cast about for new ideas in the way of strips. Comedy features were to be the next great trend in comics, and The Spectre, most powerful of all the adventure characters, was to be the first victim in the decline of The Golden Age Of The Super-Heroes.

Percival Popp was a comical character drawn in a semi-cartoonish manner, and he stood out like a sore thumb against the more-or-less straight adventure strip art style of the Spectre stories. The self-professed Super Cop was nothing more than a bumbling, amateur detective whose misadventures were soon to monopolize the entire strip, his billing even occasionally dwarfing the Spectre's. At first, both Jim Corrigan and The Spectre served as foils for Popp's half-baked "detectiving," but, in More Fun No. 90, Jim Corrigan left to join the Army and fight in the second World War. At this point Jim and The Spectre separated into two different entities, thus rendering the Astral Avenger invisible. It must have been a portent of things to come, because, with The Spectre acting as Popp's unofficial guardian angel and consigned to the status of a minor character in his own strip, the feature soon disappeared from the comic pages entirely.

After twenty years in limbo, The Spectre was revived as a straight adventure strip in issue No. 60 of Showcase. His double decade disappearance was explained by relating that he had been imprisoned within the body of Jim Corrigan due to the machinations of Azmodus, the demon of ultimate evil. In time, Spectre defeated that master of supernatural menace and went on to further adventures, eventually winning his own book. In issue No. 9 of The Spectre, The Astral Avenger was taken to task for killing a mortal by the Being who created him, and sentenced to do penitence by passing judgment over the lives of those people whose names appeared in "The Book Of Judgment," a mystic volume which was bestowed upon him. The effect was to once again make The Spectre a subordinate character in his own strip. The next issue was the last in the series. There's a lesson there....Somewhere!

